

All Ireland Review

Ireland and the Irish

Author(s): M. T.

Source: *All Ireland Review*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (Jan. 26, 1901), p. 26

Published by: [All Ireland Review](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20545169>

Accessed: 21/06/2014 11:05

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



All Ireland Review is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *All Ireland Review*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

AN ENGLISH IMPRESSION OF THE IRISH ANTHOLOGY.

The following very interesting letter records the first impressions made by the rich collection of Irish poetry put together by Mr. Stopford Brooke and Mr. Rolleston on an English reader, exceptionally qualified by cultivation and by love of literature to judge of such things. It was written by him to a relative who had given him a copy of the book, and who kindly permits us to quote it. The estimate of the Irish genius it contains is an impulsively generous one—the writer is recording in unstudied language the vivid impression made upon him by the book, and not writing as a critic with the weight of a public responsibility upon him. He has seen, however, with keen discernment, and expressed with striking eloquence some of the true qualities of Irish lyrical poetry. Whether the writer is himself a writer of poetry or not we do not know, but it is certain that he judges poetry with a poetic insight by no means common in literary criticism. We now quote his words:—

"The Treasury," made my journey south pass like a summer night's "dream," and I think it has more lovely things in it than any collection of poetry I have ever seen. There is a peculiar and most fascinating atmosphere about Irish poetry which it does one good to live in. It has the beauty of great simplicity, a quality which has made the best German poetry so loveable. There is an exquisite ballad in "The Treasury," "The Noble Lay of Aillinn," which reminded me very much of the songs of Uhland and other German poets—but then, besides the simplicity of form and idea this Irish poetry has also a quality which the German poets lack—the quality of the overflowing heart; they have not only the "Weltschmerz," but also a generous love of mankind. They see the essentials of life to be, as Emerson describes them, "the escape of all falsities, courage to be what we are, and love of what is simple and beautiful—independence and cheerful relation—these and the wish to serve, to add something to the well-being of men." The "Earth and Man" is a good example of what I mean:—

"So simple is the heart of man,
So ready for new hope and joy—
Ten thousand years since it began,
Have left it younger than a boy."

There is something truly grand in that! Surely for the Irish must be reserved a first place in the kingdom of heaven, for one feels oneself being born again, and becoming as a little child as one reads their poetry.

The book is good, as it shows all the best qualities of Irish poetry, and has first-rate examples of each of its many sides. Exquisite lyrics like "Rose Adair" and "The Dying Girl." This last might so easily have been commonplace. It would have been, if it had been written by Tennyson. But lines like,

"He struck God's lightning from her eyes
And bore Him back the flame,"

raise it at once far above that level. Epic ballads like those of Ferguson and Mangan; and two of A. E. at his very best, the "Three Counsellors" and "Inheritance." "The Song of Maelduin" is superb in another style. Celtic extravagance if you like—but, oh, the swing and the force! it puts one all on fire to read it:—

"We die in the bliss of a great new birth;
O fading phantoms of pain and mirth,
O fading loves of the old green earth,
Goodbye, goodbye, goodbye!"

But I must wait till I see you to talk it over properly. Suffice it that I love the book, and it has done me good to read it."

Dear Mr. Brook, dear Mr. Rolleston—This is very fine no doubt, and quite honest too. But—beware of the flatterer. What Lord —— says is quite sincere and very much to his credit, but from my point of view very like what in my school-boy days we used to call flummery.—Ed.

IRELAND AND THE IRISH.

BY AN ULSTER SUBSCRIBER.

Many of the papers in your Review interest me, but I take a totally different view from you. I think the Enchantment comes from the assistance given for centuries by so many of our people to build up the British Empire, instead of combining their forces to keep Ireland free and prosperous. This they have been doing diligently since the days of Diarmid McMurogh, with the result that might be naturally expected. This they will continue to do, no doubt, until the "Enchantment" is broken, of which I have little hope. They have thrown away golden opportunities since the Battle of Kinsale. You think the Lord Barry was right. I think he could not have expected other treatment than he received. You think the Irish landlords took their proper position in '98 when they hounded on their yeomanry upon those who took the part of their country. I think if they had made themselves chiefs of the movement they would have saved their land. The same in '48, when, with a few honourable exceptions, they went against the people.

I can't understand your objection to green as our national colour. Could you find one more appropriate? I should not know my land by another. Are we to abjure it because those who gave their lives and liberties for her wore it as their emblem, or because some adopt it who are not worthy? Let us keep our immortal green.

I am much interested in "The Spaniards in Ireland," and in your writings generally; but I could wish you took a different view of things—conducting what is, in many respects, a truly national journal. Perhaps you may come to do so yet. With that hope I conclude. Will you trouble to read all this? [No trouble at all, dear M. T., a great pleasure.—Ed.] I am much pleased with Miss Butler's papers.—Yours truly,

M. T.

Dear M. T.—The same post brought me two letters dropping subscriptions from persons who only alleged as the cause that they did not approve of "the tone" of the little paper. I take this opportunity of saying that I would far prefer a vituperative to a silent leave-taking: silence leaves one so much in the dark. I note everything in your gentle scolding, and some time when I have more leisure shall either answer or explain. I am glad to add, however, that in spite of those who now and then rise up wrathfully and march down the aisle in an emphatic manner the congregation as a whole steadily increases, and nearly all, whether they approve or not, seem to have intelligent and interested faces.—Ed.

BEST HOUSE COALS, WEIGHT AND QUALITY GUARANTEED, try

J. C. MEYER, RATHGAR.